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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Iraq-Syria-Turkey

Euphrates Waters

The Arab foreign ministers took on a formidable task when they agreed on April 21 to mediate the Iraqi-Syrian dispute over use of Euphrates River waters. The problem, which has defied settlement for decades, comes from the unilateral development of the upper reaches of the river by Turkey and Syria in the absence of agreement with each other or with Iraq, downstream.

The latest outcries from Baghdad became shrill in mid-April when it became apparent that Damascus had drastically cut the amount of Euphrates water flowing into Iraq. The Syrians have acknowledged privately that they took the action in retaliation for Baghdad's involvement in an attempt to topple the government of Syrian President Asad. Normally at this time of year, the melting snows in the Turkish mountains bring a surge of water down the Euphrates into Iraq. This year, only about a third of the normal volume is coming.

The Syrians began diverting Euphrates water behind their dam at Tabqa in July 1973. The \$2-billion hydroelectric and irrigation project is the most important Soviet aid project in Syria. As many as 1,000 Soviet technicians, many of whom had worked on Egypt's Aswan dam, helped in the first stage.

The Tabqa dam, 200 feet high and 4.5 miles wide, is second only to Aswan in the Middle East in terms of its hydroelectric power and irrigation potential. The dam will eventually create a lake reaching 50 miles upriver. The project will double and eventually quadruple Syria's present power capacity and double its irrigated land area.

The Turks began filling the reservoir behind their dam at Keban in October 1973. Built with Western aid, it is the largest of three multi-purpose water projects being built or planned along the Euphrates by the three countries. It is designed for

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the production of hydroelectric power and for regulation of the river for future irrigation projects. It will eventually create a lake 75 miles long.

The effect on Iraq of the simultaneous filling of the two reservoirs has been serious. The Euphrates was abnormally low in 1973 from natural causes, and Iraq was expecting the usual spring flood last spring to fill the large natural depressions where it normally stores these waters for summer irrigation. Iraq was disappointed in this expectation, and an emergency agreement among the three countries last summer was required before Iraq got enough water to save its crops. It was a one-time agreement.

Failure to reach a new agreement would be calamitous for Iraq, where more than half the labor force is employed in agriculture. The Iraqi portion of the Euphrates flows through desert terrain where nothing can be cultivated without irrigation. Nearly 35 percent of Iraqi farmland is irrigated by Euphrates water, and none of the water originates in Iraq. Summer crops, including rice and corn, are the most important irrigated crops.

Prospects for the Euphrates-fed crops were dim even before the current difficulties. Rice production fell over 40 percent in 1973 to the lowest point in more than six years. Despite a small recovery last year, in part attributable to the emergency agreement with Syria and Turkey, Baghdad had to import rice in 1974. Poor prospects for this year have already led Iraq to buy 140,000 tons of US rice. It will probably have to buy more.

The dispute over Euphrates water is pushing Iraq toward massive spending on agricultural and irrigation projects. Baghdad has allocated more than \$10 billion for such projects. Completion of six new dams and more than 600 miles of canals in about five years will permit the expansion of cultivated area by some 28 percent.

The biggest Iraqi river project is a dam that is planned on the Euphrates at Hadithah. The dam will be built with Soviet assistance and is to be completed

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six to eight years after construction begins. It is to be more than five miles wide and will provide Iraq with 80 percent of its water needs for industry and irrigation--if Iraq can get enough water to fill the reservoir.

Diplomatic efforts to reach agreement on water rights among the three countries go back as far as 1946, but Iraq has been unable to get assurances of enough water while the Syrian and Turkish reservoirs are being filled. Turkey says Iraq wastes water through poor irrigation practices and could get by on less than it now receives. Syria agrees in principle with some of Iraq's demands, but is reluctant to implement any of them.

The problem is in large part political, especially the long-standing and bitter rivalry between the Baath parties ruling in Iraq and Syria. On the economic side, the two countries are at odds over problems related to the shipment of Iraqi oil across Syria to the Mediterranean and of Iraqi imports in the other direction.

In early April, Iraq requested a meeting of the Arab foreign ministers to settle the dispute. On April 21, the foreign ministers meeting in Cairo agreed to set up a commission to investigate the problem on the scene. Syria stopped cooperating with the commission on April 30 in protest over Iraqi propaganda.

Saudi Petroleum Minister Yamani was brought into the dispute last week in an effort to get agreement. Following tripartite talks in Riyadh that ended on May 3, the Iraqi and Syrian delegates returned home for consultations. Another meeting is expected shortly.

The USSR, deeply involved in assisting both the Syrians and the Iraqis on their dams, tried to get agreement between the two before proceeding with either project. Moscow apparently succumbed to pressures to begin anyway, but is almost certainly continuing to push for an Iraqi-Syrian agreement. The visits to Moscow in April of Iraqi strongman Saddam Husayn and of Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam were probably in part devoted to the matter.

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If an agreement can be reached in Riyadh, it will probably be nothing more than another stop-gap solution similar to the one last year. Such an agreement would limit the effects of the current drought in Iraq and save Iraq's summer crops. It would probably have to be renewed at least one more year, at which time Syria and Turkey, will have filled their reservoirs.

A longer term solution will be difficult to come by.

-- Turkey has ambitious plans to develop the Euphrates south of its dam at Keban and will ultimately require 13 billion cubic meters of water annually. Turkey now uses about 1.2 billion.

-- Syria's ambitious plans would raise annual take from the Euphrates from the present 4.8 billion cubic meters to 8 billion.

-- Iraqi plans call for increasing water use from the present 12.8 billion cubic meters to 19 billion annually.

The three countries thus have plans for half again as much water as the Euphrates River normally carries. Together, they hope to use some 40 billion cubic meters of water annually; the 40-year average recorded near the Iraqi dam site at Hadithah is only 27.4 billion cubic meters annually. (SECRET)

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India

Spring Crop May Set Record

The spring harvest in India could exceed the three-year-old record of 42.2 million tons of grain, according to US embassy officials who have made an extensive tour of growing areas. An improvement in wheat production is attributed to favorable weather, crucial during early plant development.

This better-than-expected performance gives New Delhi some leeway on commercial grain imports. It now has a choice between continuing costly grain imports to start replenishing reserves or allocating import funds to petroleum and other commodities needed to increase lagging industrial output. The latter option involves gambling on a good summer monsoon. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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